

JOHN HUTCHINGS AND ROBERT G. BEE—PIONEER
UTAH VALLEY NATURALISTS⁽¹⁾

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It has often been the case in the annals of natural history that many of the greatest contributions to our fund of scientific knowledge have come from the works of amateurs who have pursued these interests purely from taste rather than professionally. This has been particularly true in the fields of ornithology, entomology, botany, conchology, and mineralogy where the beauties of design, color and form of the several objects of natural history have ever been appealing to the esthetic aspect of the mind and have laid bare the pathway toward the uncovering of the more prosaic scientific facts. All true naturalists are artists at heart, and unfortunately their tastes have often carried them no further than the collection and arrangement of their material into trays and cabinets where their beauties may be seen and appreciated; but others have been more painstaking and assiduous in recording the dull statistics that are so vital to the fine analysis of scientific principles.

The ornithological work of John Hutchings and Robert G. Bee in central Utah aptly illustrates a lifetime of devotion to a delightful hobby combined with a conscientious endeavor to place their findings at the disposal of students who may follow them.

JOHN HUTCHINGS (1889—

John Hutchings, son of Mary Wanlass and William Lawrence Hutchings was born at Lehi, Utah County, Utah, March 11, 1889. He was educated in the public schools of Lehi and spent one quarter during 1909 at Brigham Young University.

From his early childhood he was an ardent collector of natural objects of beauty. When he was very young, the couch in the front room of his parents' home was a depository for a collection of pretty rocks gathered from a nearby stream as well as Indian relics found

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about his father's farm. It so happened that this farm had been an Indian camp ground, and John spent many of his leisure hours in search of arrow heads and other items of archeological interest.

His interest in birds also began during his childhood and he states that as far back as he can remember he tried to mount bird specimens using hay leaves as stuffing. During the period of his young manhood Mr. Hutchings became trained in the art of taxidermy and has become extremely proficient in that field. Among his works in this field are groups of Brewster's egret, mallard, white-faced glossy ibis, kingfisher, ferruginous rough-legged hawk, and horned owl in their natural settings now on display at Brigham Young University. In addition there are individual mounts of the wood ibis, little brown crane and a number of others in the mounted bird collection at the University.

In his early days of egg collecting, Mr. Hutchings took only a single egg from each nest, not wishing to disturb the activities of the birds more than necessary. It was during this period, however, that he learned much about the identity and habits of the birds of his locality, a feature that helped him greatly in his future work. Mr. Hutchings credits Robert G. Bee of Provo with starting him out in his scientific collection of bird eggs and nesting records. His collection now consists of several hundreds of specimens consisting of complete clutches of eggs, nests and nesting material. The materials are well preserved, and the data cataloged on filing cards. Whenever necessary to establish identity a specimen of the nesting bird was also collected and preserved.

Being well known as a taxidermist and naturalist many specimens of rare and unusual birds were brought to him for identification and these were usually preserved as mounted specimens.

On September 17, 1913 he was married to Eunice Colledge, and since that time the two have worked together in all of the collecting activities. In addition to their work with the birds they have made extensive excavations and collections in Indian mounds of Utah County and have amassed a large collection of minerals.

This interest in a variety of fields keeps Mr. and Mrs. Hutchings busy in their spare time throughout the year. The period from late February through July is devoted to the collection of bird eggs and minerals. The months of August, September, and October are spent in excavating Indian mounds and collecting artifacts. They have devoted themselves to Utah County in this study and have obtained and

cataloged thousands of specimens. Taxidermy generally occupies the leisure time during the winter, with an occasional trip for mineral specimens when opportunity permits.

Mr. Hutchings has also been devoted to several public activities, particularly scouting and church work. In both of these he has been able to make good use of his knowledge of natural history. He has been called upon repeatedly to lecture before schools and societies of various types and has been throughout an ardent champion of the out of doors.

His vocational activities have been varied and interesting. He has worked as a farmer, miner and at various odd jobs. In August 1918 he became a U. S. mail carrier at Lehi and has pursued this occupation to the present time. In 1948 he plans to retire from his vocation and devote the remainder of his time to his collections.

ROBERT GEORGE BEE (1882—)

Robert George Bee, son of Robert and Lavina Clive Bee, was born at Provo, Utah County, Utah, February 14, 1882. The first part of his education was in the public schools of Provo, after which he completed a three-year liberal arts course in the old Proctor Academy of Provo, a school sponsored by the Congregational Educational Society of Boston.

Mr. Bee began his oological collections in 1892. He was attracted, like many youngsters by the beauty of birds' eggs, and at first collected only one egg from each nest. The eggs were punctured at both ends and the contents blown out. No effort was made at first to preserve the scientific data, but a number of these eggs are still extant in Mr. Bee's collection. They were preserved by glueing them on the backs of book-like containers.

During his studies at Proctor Academy he became acquainted with S. H. Goodwin who was a veteran oologist and who gave Mr. Bee an added stimulus to continue with this work. His field work has been centered mainly about Utah Valley and vicinity. He has worked mainly with the larger species especially the water birds, shore birds, hawks and owls. His work with the golden eagle is especially outstanding. Mr. Bee has remarked to the writer on many occasions that he worked with these more difficult species involving hazardous climbing during his younger days and left the small birds for his old age.

He has been especially devoted to the careful preservation of his collections and data. The egg sets are housed in individual round boxes, near clutch size, fitted with a lid topped with a convex crystal glass. This container is dust proof and allows a visibility of about 80% of each egg. The bottom of the box is provided with an adjustable cloth cushion that holds the eggs taut against the glass top. These boxes were devised and constructed by Mr. Bee and his son James.

A hundred and sixty species of Utah birds and numerous exotic species are represented in the Bee collection. In addition there are many birds' nests and other ornithological material in the collection. He has placed 50 mounted specimens of birds in the collection of Brigham Young University.

Mr. Bee's collection data and journals are well preserved. Collection records are placed in ledger book with full data for each set of eggs. In addition there are several typewritten volumes of notes pertaining especially to the ornithology of Utah Valley.

Gaining his inspiration from Mr. Hutchings, Bee made a collection of minerals during the earlier part of this collecting career. This collection comprising many outstanding specimens was ultimately placed in the Peabody, Field and United States National Museums. In collaboration with his son James, who also shares his interest in ornithology, Mr. Bee has made some studies of the ancient Indian cultures of Utah County.

Mr. Bee's vocational career has been varied and interesting. He has worked mainly as a clothing salesman, but has also been a drug store clerk, member of a government surveying party, musician in dance and opera orchestras, and insurance salesman. He has had ambitions to study architecture and music, but circumstances prevented the carrying out of these desires.

In 1935 Mr. Bee accepted a position with the National Parks Service as wildlife technician on the Farmington Bay Refuge. He relates that "I took it to get the gnawing interest in wildlife, particularly ornithology, out of my system." About five years were devoted to wildlife research and refuge construction, during which time two comprehensive, illustrated reports on the wildlife of Farmington Bay and the technique of artificial refuge construction, were prepared for the Park Service. At the completion of this project Mr. Bee returned to Provo and resumed his clothing business.

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It seems appropriate at this time that the ornithological work of

these two naturalists be brought to the attention of workers in this field, since both men are reaching the age when strenuous field work will no longer be possible. While much of the lore of their experiences may never be written, their contribution in this issue of the Great Basin Naturalist presents a summary of their work and should be of great value to future ornithologists of this area.